

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A parts procurement system comprising:
virtual production line preparation means for preparing a virtual production line in which objects manufactured thereon are virtually placed in sequence based on long-term production plan data that is more than one month covering variable production of the objects and fixed production plan data covering fixed production of the objects; and
parts ordering means for determining parts and the number of the parts necessary for manufacturing the objects on the virtual production line prepared by the virtual production line preparation means, as well as calculating the parts ordering timing based on a production timing of the objects and parts delivery lead time.
2. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising correction means for correcting the virtual production line prepared by the virtual production line preparation means according to actual production results of the objects, wherein the parts ordering means places a parts order after calculating the parts ordering timing based on the corrected virtual production line.
3. (Original) A system according to claim 2, wherein the correction means changes the virtual production line by correcting at least one parameter out of a production sequence change, a design change of the object, a production progress, and a parts procurement lead time.
4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the parts ordering means places orders based on the calculated parts ordering timing.
5. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the parts ordering means establishes a communication link with at least one supplier of the parts to order the parts.

6. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the fixed production plan data relates to production of the objects over a first time period and the long-term production plan data relates to production of the objects over a second time period that is longer than the second time period.

7. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the objects are vehicles.

8. (Original) A system according to claim 7, wherein the vehicles are automobiles.

9. (Currently Amended) A parts procurement system comprising a controller that:

prepares a virtual production line in which objects manufactured thereon are virtually placed in sequence based on long-term production plan data that is more than one month covering variable production of the objects and fixed production plan data covering fixed production of the objects; and

determines parts and the number of the parts necessary for manufacturing the objects on the prepared virtual production line, and calculates the parts ordering timing based on a production timing of the objects and parts delivery lead time.

10. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein the controller corrects the prepared virtual production line according to actual production results of the objects, and places a parts order after calculating the parts ordering timing based on the corrected virtual production line.

11. (Original) A system according to claim 10, wherein the controller changes the prepared virtual production line by correcting at least one parameter out of a production sequence change, a design change of the object, a production progress, and a parts procurement lead time.

12. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein the controller places orders based on the calculated parts ordering timing.

13. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein the controller establishes a communication link with at least one supplier of the parts to order the parts.

14. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein the fixed production plan data relates to production of the objects over a first time period and the long-term production plan data relates to production of the objects over a second time period that is longer than the second time period.

15. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein the objects are vehicles.

16. (Original) A system according to claim 15, wherein the vehicles are automobiles.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of procuring parts comprising:
preparing a virtual production line in which objects manufactured thereon are virtually placed in sequence based on long-term production plan data that is more than one month covering variable production of the objects and fixed production plan data covering fixed production of the objects;

determining parts and the number of the parts necessary for manufacturing the objects on the prepared virtual production line; and

calculating the parts ordering timing based on a production timing of the objects and parts delivery lead time.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 17, further comprising:
correcting the prepared virtual production line according to actual production results of the objects; and

placing a parts order after calculating the parts ordering timing based on the corrected virtual production line.

19. (Original) A method according to claim 18, wherein the prepared virtual production line is changed by correcting at least one parameter out of a production sequence change, a design change of the object, a production progress, and a parts procurement lead time.
20. (Original) A method according to claim 17, further comprising placing orders based on the calculated parts ordering timing.
21. (Original) A method according to claim 17, further comprising establishing a communication link with at least one supplier of the parts to order the parts.
22. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein the fixed production plan data relates to production of the objects over a first time period and the long-term production plan data relates to production of the objects over a second time period that is longer than the second time period.
23. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein the objects are vehicles.
24. (Original) A method according to claim 23, wherein the vehicles are automobiles.